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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Evacuated Students Need to be Accepted by Arizona Schools, Goddard and Horne Say

(Phoenix, Ariz. - September 2, 2005) Arizona schools have a legal responsibility to promptly enroll students who have come to this state after being forced from their Gulf Coast homes by Hurricane Katrina, Attorney General Terry Goddard and State School Superintendent Tom Horne said today.

"These students need to be given a place in our schools as soon as possible," Goddard said. "It's the right thing to do, and it is also the law."

"The devastation of Hurricane Katrina is a national disaster, and Arizona will extend every available resource to educate any student who relocates to Arizona temporarily or permanently," Horne said.

Under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act, these children qualify as homeless and must be enrolled in the school district where they are temporarily living, Goddard said. They may not be turned away or delayed admission from public schools because they lack records that are normally required. These include academic records, birth certificates, immunization records, proof of residency or other documentation.

The students are entitled to the same services as any other student in the district, including transportation and special education.

Thousands of families from Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama have been displaced by the hurricane. Many have joined family and friends in other states across the nation.

Federal funds are available to reimburse schools for educating these students under the McKinney-Vento Act. In the event such money is exhausted, Goddard and Horne said they will seek additional federal funding.

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